

Rowe Board of Selectmen Meeting
December 26, 2018
6:30 P.M.
Rowe Town Hall – Meeting Room 1

Board of Selectmen: Chair Jennifer Morse, Vice-Chair Dennis May, Selectman Chuck Sokol
Administrative Assistant: Paul McLatchy III
Audience of Citizens: Sandra Daviau, MLP Manager David Dvore, Florence Veber

Call to Order: The meeting was called to order by Chair Morse at 6:32 P.M., a quorum of the board present.

Appointment: The Board was scheduled to meet with Monroe Selectman David Gagne. Chair Morse reported that he will not be attending the meeting tonight.

Broadband Update: MLP Manager David Dvore was invited to the table to speak. Mr. Dvore informed the Board that he will be leaving for India the third week in January for an extended period of time, and wanted to go over a few things before he left.

The Broadband project is still moving forward at an appropriate pace. The installation of wires along poles will begin shortly, and he is hoping to have a functional hut ready in March. Once complete, individual homes will then be connected.

Mr. Dvore asked the Board how they felt with the current version of the Wired West (WW) contract. Nothing has been heard back from town counsel to the Selectboard, though Mr. Dvore has been in contact with her and the two seemed to have ironed out some differences. There were some concerns over a Most Favored Nation clause, and a timeline for auto-renewal. He has requested that the Board be able to make a decision by January 9th, so that the WW Board can vote to approve the contract when they meet the following week. After the contract is approved, Westfield Gas & Electric (WGE) will begin marketing and signing people up.

So far the budget of \$1.5 million seems to be on-target. This is assuming that the state will reimburse make-ready overrun costs, which they claim they will do. Otherwise, this will add an additional \$200,000 to the project. An additional unknown is the cost of the drops. If every home in town takes service and every home that has conduit needs new conduit installed, it will cost roughly \$300,000 to drop lines to every home. This is a worst-case scenario, however. Mr. Dvore is looking to spend around \$150,000. The entire state grant has been expended, which is a good thing as any unexpended funds would need to be returned. The project is currently drawing on the allocated moneys from stabilization. In a total worst-case scenario, Mr. Dvore is estimating that the town will need to borrow about \$500,000 to finish the project, well under the \$860,000 approved by town voters.

The hut has been installed, though some comments have been made about the look of it. Mr. Dvore said he will leave the beautification of the hut to the Board. Any changes made at this point would be purely aesthetic, and shouldn't have any impact on operations, with the possible exception of shrubbery being planted. The hut will also need a propane tank installed to power the generator. Per Mr. Dvore's calculations, he is calling for a 500-gallon tank, which will be eight feet long and three feet high. This will cover four days of generator use, enough time to get a refill. It will need to be at least ten feet away

from the generator. A question was raised about the size, and the matter will be looked into before making a final decision.

In regards to the service that the town buildings will need, Mr. Dvore has not heard anything from the school about what they want. He asked the Board what they would like for the municipal center (Town Hall, Fire Station, and DPW Building). Selectman Sokol asked about whether the town might be able to utilize existing fiber between the buildings to run a single network, rather than having to pay for service to each building individually. This question may be best answered by the town's IT department.

As everything is planned for the construction phase, there shouldn't be many issues during Mr. Dvore's absence. However, he will be remaining in touch with the appropriate parties while over there and should be able to handle any small matters. Major issues will be reported from Mr. Dvore to the Board to handle. He was thanked for the update, and left the meeting at 7:18.

Liaisons: Chair Morse requested that the Board consider adding a new liaison position for the town hall, to cover issues with the building and the staff. She wants to have a member who can be the point person for problems and concerns. Currently she is serving as the DPW liaison. Mr. Sokol offered to take over the DPW position and Vice-Chair May will combine Police, Fire, and EMS into one role. Chair Morse will then be the new Town Hall liaison.

Kings Highway Bridge: A communication was received from Gill Engineering, the company hired to engineer and plan the replacement of the Kings Highway Bridge. They have proposed that the town consider using a temporary bridge currently being used in Shelburne. This will allow for vehicular traffic to pass during construction. The cost to bring it to Rowe would run in the range of \$15,000-\$20,000, but could then save nearly \$80,000 by allowing the current bridge to close during construction rather than having to remain open. Chair Morse will contact Gill Engineering and let them know the town is interested.

Insurance:

A motion was made by Selectman Sokol that "the Selectboard set the rate at which the town will contribute to the premiums of town employees, their spouses and dependents for blanket hospital, surgical, medical and other insurance be set at 85% of the total said premium. If this vote has already been taken by a previous Selectboard, then this vote is to ratify that previous vote. If no previous vote, then this vote is to set said rate of payment by the town." The motion was seconded by Chair Morse, and the vote was 2-0-1, with Vice-Chair May abstaining as he receives insurance through the town.

Selectman Sokol made a second motion that "the Selectboard set the rate at which the town will contribute to the premiums for retired town employees, their spouses and dependents for blanket hospital, surgical, medical and other health insurance be set at 85% of the total said premium. If this vote has already been taken by a previous Selectboard, then this vote is to ratify that previous vote. If no previous vote, then this vote is to set said rate of payment by the town." The motion was seconded by Chair Morse, and the vote was 2-0-1 in favor, with Vice-Chair May abstaining.

Gracy House: Executive Secretary Janice Boudreau has obtained several estimates for indoor air quality testing, surface cleaning and treating, and contractors for other work needed. A list is attached. Council on Aging co-chair Sandra Daviau asked if it would be possible to move the Council's computer from the upstairs station to the Gracy House (once work has been done) so that they may have an office in the future. Ms. Daviau

currently works for the town, but will be retiring at the end of June. No vote was taken, but all three members seemed amenable to the idea.

Fire Department: Chair Morse met with Sarah Reynolds from Charlemont. The regionalization agreement is being reviewed by K&P Law, Charlemont's counsel. The agreement basically states that each town will pay separately, but will have Dennis Annear serve as fire chief for both towns. Greater regionalization is currently being discussed in the area, with the possibility of having a full-time department based in Shelburne. This could lead to grant eligibility in the future. Chair Morse noted that Charlemont is now being toned out whenever the Rowe Fire Department is called to an incident.

The town is also considering donating the tanker to the Halifax, Vermont Fire Department. In exchange for the town donating the truck, Halifax will purchase a utility body to upgrade an existing F-550 so that it may be used as a rescue vehicle, as well as make a donation of \$5,500 to the town.

DPW Vehicle Exhaust: New OSHA regulations will be going into effect on February 1st that may affect DPW trucks. The regulation requires the installation of filters that prevent exhaust from leaking into an enclosed area (such as the bay the trucks are kept in). A quote to the Town of Charlemont placed a cost estimate of \$8,739.06 per vehicle. Selectman Sokol will get in touch with DPW Superintendent Larned to see if the DPW will be required to make the changes.

Retirement/Staffing: Tax Collector Sandy Daviau is retiring at the end of June from all town positions. Her current term ends in May, at which time it will shift from an elected position to an appointed position. The Board is interested in appointing her from May until her retirement so that she can help train whoever will be hired to take over for her. Ms. Daviau pointed out that not much activity occurs during that time frame, but did offer to come in and help out if any issues arise down the road. As May 1st is the deadline for the second-half tax bills, perhaps the new tax collector will be brought on sooner. A job description has been written by Ms. Daviau, and it is being converted to match the town's format. Chair Morse is interested in seeing what the Department of Revenue (DOR) will be recommending in regards to this position when they conduct their review in January.

Goal Post: The Planning Board has voted that they will no longer be responsible for publishing The Goal Post after July 1st. No vote has been taken by the town, but it appears that the Board of Selectmen will likely assume oversight over the newsletter. A brief discussion ensued as to whether it might be appropriate to hire someone as the editor, or perhaps it could be combined with an existing position. The DOR recommendation may provide guidance. The Board *is* interested in conducting a survey before the end of the fiscal year, to obtain feedback about how people would like to receive The Goal Post (if at all), and what they would like to see in it. Chair Morse and Mr. McLatchy will work on a draft timeline and survey.

Budget Hearings: Budget hearings will begin on January 16th and take place every week until February 27th with the exception of February 13th.

Executive Secretary Update: A written update was submitted by Janice Boudreau:

- The Town Hall boiler has been serviced and appears to be okay.
- The elevator is now non-functioning. Mr. McLatchy will contact the company tomorrow.

- The surplus fridge has received one bid in the amount of \$20 from Paul McLatchy III. Police Chief Julie Shippee has requested it for the Police Department, though Chair Morse pointed out that she has the use of the Fire Department's fridge.

A motion was made by Chair Morse and seconded by Vice-Chair May to award the surplus fridge to the highest bidder- Paul McLatchy III in the amount of \$20.00. The vote was 3-0-0 in favor.

- There have been two offers for hosting the town's emails. A list of existing and suggested emails needs to be compiled. Perhaps more positions/office-holders in town should have town emails.
- Ms. Boudreau and Mr. McLatchy have completed their work on the OPEB spreadsheets, and the rest of the work lies with Treasurer Joanne Semanie. Chair Morse will contact her as the Town Hall liaison.

OBRA: The Town seems to be getting conflicting information on whether or not it is a requirement for part-time employees to be enrolled in OBRA rather than Social Security. Treasurer Semanie has reported that it is only optional at this point, though starting January 1st she will be moving everyone who isn't part of the county or teachers' retirement to an OBRA account. The Selectmen requested Treasurer provide from a legal authority.

Minutes: The following minutes were addressed:

November 28th: A motion was made by Chair Morse and seconded by Vice-Chair May to approve the minutes. The vote was 2-0-1 in favor, with Selectman Sokol abstaining as he was absent.

December 5th: A motion was made by Selectman Sokol and seconded by Chair Morse to accept the minutes "as reformatted". The vote was 3-0-0 in favor.

December 12th: A motion was made by Vice-Chair May and seconded by Selectman Sokol to approve the minutes as amended. The vote was 2-0-1 in favor, with Chair Morse abstaining as she was absent.

All three sets were signed, and Mr. McLatchy will make the necessary changes on the other pages tomorrow.

Police Details: A question was raised about who gets to decide whether a detail will be needed during the stringing of fiber lines. The Board will ask the Police Chief for her recommendations, with the Board making the final decision. It was agreed to pay at a rate of \$40/hour. Vice-Chair May will let MLP Manager David Dvore know that he needs to get in touch with Chief Shippee.

Council on Aging Mileage: Audience member Florence Veber, who also serves on the Council on Aging, asked why there was a change in the policy regarding mileage reimbursements. The new policy is to pool together six months' worth of mileage and issue two checks a year, rather than on a monthly basis. Supposedly a large number of small checks were being issued to people for their mileage, but some were not being cashed, causing an issue with bookkeeping. Hopefully with larger amounts, people will be more inclined to cash them. Selectman Sokol suggested that perhaps a petty cash system might be a possible alternative.

Warrants: Selectman Sokol and Vice-Chair May signed Payroll Warrant P-13 and Vendor Warrant W-14. Vice-Chair May invoked the rule of necessity as he has a family member on the warrant. Chair Morse has a family member as well and therefore did not sign as the other two selectmen had.

Next Meeting: The Board will meet on January 9th.

Adjourn: A motion was made by Selectman Sokol to adjourn, and was seconded by Vice-Chair May. The vote was 3-0-0 in favor. The meeting was closed at 8:34.

Respectfully Submitted,

Paul McLatchy III, Administrative Clerk

Approved on: January 9, 2019

Jennifer Morse, Chair



Dennis May, Vice-Chair



Charles Sokol, Selectman

Documents:

1. Agenda- 12-26-18
2. Email from David Dvore- December 26, 2018
3. Letter from Gill Engineering
4. Gill Engineering Schematic
5. Suggested Insurance Motions from Town Counsel Donna MacNichol
6. Gracy House Work Quotes
7. Executive Secretary Update
8. Quote from Ward re: Exhaust Upgrades for Charlemont
9. Memo from Board of Assessors re: FY19 Classification- 12/4/18
10. Notice from Department of Public Utilities- 11/29/18
11. November 2018 Police Report